

HISTORIES OF NEWARK
1758 - 2008

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1758 - 2008

This limited edition of one thousand copies is published through the Office of the Mayor of Newark, Delaware, and the Delaware Heritage Commission. Twelve deluxe copies numbered 1 through 12 are bound in leather with a slipcase and include printed ephemera relating to this project along with a British half sterling minted in 1758 showing the profile of King George II on the front and the crowned shield cruciform and date on the back.

This is copy number

Histories of Newark

1758-2008

SEVENTY-FIVE STORIES ABOUT
NEWARK, DELAWARE,
AND ITS CITIZENS

To Vance Funk, III
who was in the right place at the right time.

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Newark, Delaware

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HISTORIES OF NEWARK: 1758-2008

PREFACE

According to my Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary—I was never allowed to use a Webster’s Dictionary—a preface is a statement dealing primarily with the purpose and scope of the publication.

This publication is not your typical anniversary book. It not only traces the history of the City of Newark, it also places a lot of emphasis on special events, buildings and persons within the city. The book is intended to provide a personality and reflect a sense of community here in our town. It has been a long time since the history of the City of Newark has been written and hopefully it will not be another one hundred years before the next one is published.

History has always been very important to me, especially since I come from a family who arrived in Philadelphia in 1717. My relatives were Quakers and quickly migrated to Lancaster, Pennsylvania only to be banished to the Shenandoah Valley because they took up arms during the Revolutionary War.

We citizens of Newark are extremely proud of our history, which began when King George II proclaimed Newark a marketplace in the colony of Delaware. Various folktales exist that attempt to explain how we came to be called Newark. I know of three: Newark was similar to a city in Great Britain known as Newark-on-the-Trent. That town, like ours, has a waterway through its village which aided in its commerce. Thus someone in our past decided Newark would be an appropriate name. Another plausible scenario is that the town was named after the village of Wark in England. Wark was the ancestral home of one of the state’s first prominent residents, Valentine Hollingsworth. Hollingsworth signed a patent for a deed of land north of Wilmington which he named



HISTORIES OF NEWARK: 1758-2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Newark Community History project can only begin to thank those who contributed to this book, but we can try. Other than all of the authors who shared their love of local history and whose names are already listed in the table of contents of this book, we wish to acknowledge many others who helped us with enthusiasm, creativity and gracious gifts of resources.

First and foremost, we gratefully acknowledge Mayor Funk and his vision of community for Our Funky Town. For images that appear throughout this book, we thank: Richard L. Dayton for his remarkable documentary of Newark’s architectural history; Special Collections at the University of Delaware Library for their foresight in collecting and preserving so many family papers and postcards, maps, photographs, ephemera and documents; Phyllis Tucker-Saunders and the Newark Black Family Reunion for treasuring community; both the Newark Police Department and the Newark Department of Parks and Recreation for maintaining their historic images; Barbara Dale Kidd for great albums related to Main Street businesses; Michael Brock for his illustration; Historical Society of Delaware for their church images; Terry Bryan for being a money guy; Aetna Hose, Hook & Ladder for their hot images; Donna Draper for photos; David Robertson for his ’60s flashback; Marilyn Minster and Kathy Policastro for capturing the spirit of family business; Annette Cornish for providing the St. John Church material; tank girls Elaine Matt and Cheryl Markiewicz; Jay Custer and the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research for early American Indian artifacts; Rebecca Herman for photos and ephemera; Andy Brennan for details and Jerry Grant for loan of personal music memorabilia because we Like it Like That, too.

Here’s a shout to Casey at Tric Zine for sharing Hangnail Phillips’s music history and another to Linda Stapleford for help on the White Clay Creek. We thank Victoria Owens for the spirit of historic preservation that




New Wark in 1683. Hollingsworth’s son Henry inherited the New Wark homestead and purchased land in Maryland near the present-day city in 1712. Henry and his sons traveled through the town to the important port village of Christiana for business dealings and it was suggested that the crossroads near the White Clay Creek be named Newark. The third theory is that New Ark refers to the New Covenant, reflecting the early religious faith of those who settled here in the time of the Great Awakening.

The first formal recognition of Newark came in 1758 when King George II granted permission for a semi-annual fair and market. In 1852 Newark received an official town charter from the Delaware General Assembly. In 1887 the town was reincorporated.

I have the honor to thank the many Newark citizens who stepped forward and spent nearly two years gathering articles, photographs, interviews and stories for this book.

I would especially like to thank the Delaware Heritage Commission and the University of Delaware’s Morris Library Special Collections Department for their guidance and assistance.


Mayor Vance Funk III
Newark, Delaware
June 2007

is such a part of this project, Anita Puglisi for her interviews with City Council principals, and Bernie Herman for important trivia and connections. Bill Deering gets a big bearhug for the loan of his photography gear to let us photograph the Citizens of Newark and other things. Richard Handloff let us use the back of the vacated CVS on Main Street as a walk-in studio and the sales office of the new Washington House condominiums is due our thanks for sharing the space with us and directing traffic. Special thanks to Al Romagnoli at Newark Camera for spur-of-the-moment lens help. We thank people catchers Frank Barbehenn and friendly Misses Lucie Melvin and Emma Meizell for recruiting Citizens on Main Street to Get In Line. Thanks to Charlotte Deering for starting the citizen line and Tom Melvin for holding down the fort. Thanks to local radio station WVUD for public service announcements, and the Newark Post and Newark Life Magazine for help with publicity. Thank you Rachel Kipp and William Bretzger for the kick-off News Journal article, and Tim Mislock for reporting the project in The Review. For providing us with meeting space to plan this book, we thank the United Methodist Church and the Newark Senior Center.

Bottomless heartfelt thanks to Wallflowers Press for artistry and execution, and thanks to the book’s printer Coleman Bye III, who is also from Newark, of Mercantile Press in Wilmington, Delaware; Oxford Bookbinding Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Hoster Bindery Inc. in Ivyland, Pennsylvania. We appreciate Coincraft of London, England, for helping complete our stash of a dozen 1758 King George II half shillings to accompany the beautifully bound deluxe editions masterfully crafted by Don Rash. And not least of all, we thank the Delaware Heritage Commission in our state because this is what Histories of Newark is all about.

This panorama is from the Newark Reservoir, a new and popular site for hikers. It was constructed just east of Paper Mill Road on the site of the former Koelig Farm. Courtesy Wallflowers Press.

HISTORIES OF NEWARK: 1758-2008
AN INTRODUCTION

Histories of Newark is a community history project drawn from the contributions of volunteer citizens and neighbors from all walks of life. More than two years ago, academics, weekend scholars, civic-minded boosters, and simple lovers of local history heeded Mayor Vance Funk’s call for residents to write a long-overdue update to the only “recent” history of Newark, Francis Cooch’s 1936 *Little Known History of Newark, Delaware, and Its Environs*. Led by Paul Bauernschmidt, Mayor Funk’s appointed project director, a group of volunteers met monthly to collect text and images for the new history, envisioned to be a centerpiece of the city’s 250th anniversary celebration in 2008. Many of these meetings ended with inevitably nostalgic “remember when” conversations, but the working group made progress by following Bauernschmidt’s plan to adapt a content outline based on *Delaware: A Guide to the First State*, which was a Depression-era Federal Writers Project conducted under the auspices of Roosevelt’s Works Progress Administration. As with that 1938 publication, which was drawn from the research and writing of nearly one hundred Delawareans, this new history of Newark is drawn from the contributions of many, many citizens. Accordingly, the reader will notice a wide variance in scholarship, citation style, and voice from chapter to chapter, not to mention dated language and perspectives when historic sources are quoted.

The reader also will notice the unavoidable omission of any number of personal names, organizations, places, or events that have been part of Newark’s rich past. Discussing this problem, the working group unanimously agreed on a title for the collective project, *Histories of Newark*, i.e., the group realized that there can be no definitive History of Newark until all citizens have contributed their own stories. The spirit of the community, though, is captured in the creative design and citizen photography of Ray Nichols and Jill Cypher, proprietors



And here starts the sequence of citizen photos. Hundreds of times we were asked, “What do you want us to do?”

These five had an idea of what they wanted to do and it ended up being the best “Newark” photo of the nearly 1,500 photos. Can you figure it out?

So starts the line of citizen photographs that ends over 200 feet later.

of Wallflowers Press. In the tradition of Cooch’s *Little Known History of Newark*, which was printed in 1936 in Newark at Everett Johnson’s Press of Kells, Wallflowers Press is a fine printing and letterpress establishment flourishing in our city today.

With snapshots of Newarkers running in a ribbon through the book, *Histories of Newark* stands as a wonderfully literate time capsule from our 250th anniversary. It will allow future readers to remember our beginnings, understand our landscapes, and gain an appreciation for the character of a large municipality that still cherishes neighborhood charm in traditions such as Community Day and Newark Nite. Contributors to this project tried to capture the essence of Main Street, Newark government, the city economy, the various civic, cultural and religious institutions, and even the ways of looking at the world that typify Delaware and the city of Newark.

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin
Newark, Delaware
June 2007

MARCH 30 - JUNE 2, 2007
THE CITIZEN PHOTOS

The citizen photos deserve a bit of an explanation. We were several months into the book before the idea came up. One of the things we wanted to bring to the book was humanity. We thought it would be great to have every family photo album available to make the story of Newark the story of its people. But that turns out to be nearly an impossibility. Also in a book like this, there is usually no room for the present. We’ve filled 280 pages telling the story of the city’s first 250 years. In order to find a way to include the past and at the same time include something of the present, we came up with the *citizen band*. We set up a photo studio with a white seamless background. For six consecutive Fridays and Saturdays we invited townspeople, families, dogs, strollers, motorcycles, bicycles, skateboards, and objects to be included in a one-inch-high band that would run from the first page of the histories through the last. As best we could count there are 3,767 people included. This amounts to about one of every seven citizens. A few sneaked in more than once and we loved how they would bring new groups of friends each time.



This book is full of stories, both written and unwritten.



We strongly hope that every reader will be encouraged to record the words, pictures and physical things that provide evidence of the past for the simple satisfaction that it will bring in the future.

One special story is worth noting. Jane Woolsey (above and far right with three colleagues from the Post House on Main Street) received an anonymous letter in the mail (shown above) with a news clipping about our citizen photographs. If anyone ever wonders what small town America is about, it is in that letter. It is in Newark.

Jill Cypher & Ray Nichols
Wallflowers Press
November 2007

A HISTORY OF
NEWARK HIGH SCHOOL

by Brent J. Freccia

In the 250 years of Newark, few institutions have existed as long or have had as much of an impact on the community as Newark High School. Education is the hallmark of most personal success stories and for nearly half of the city’s history Newark High School has represented that path to success for many of its citizens. The “Commitment to Excellence” motto now used by the school is significant when considering the symbiotic relationship between how the school has helped shape the minds of the community—a community of youth who as adults helped transform the city during the twentieth century. Since the first graduation in 1893, thousands of students have become alumni and hundreds of teachers and administrators have taught, disciplined and shaped young minds. The building itself has even changed, with various additions, at four different locations throughout the city. While the buildings, students and faculty members have changed, however, the institution itself is a clear emblem of the strength of the community that it serves.



Two views of the familiar Academy Building on Main Street, former location for Newark Public High School, later the Town Library and now part of the University of Delaware. Courtesy University of Delaware Library.

a larger facility down the street, while the primary students would remain at 83 East Main Street.

NEWARK PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL, 1898-1925

The new incarnation, the Newark Public High School, opened its doors as a separate institution for the first time in 1898 at the recently vacated Academy of Newark Building at the corner of Main and Academy streets in Newark. The previous tenant, a private school called the Newark Academy, had closed the previous year



due to financial troubles. The building itself was originally home to the similarly named Academy of Newark, a predecessor to the University of Delaware, and was constructed in 1843. Standing at two stories tall with a total of six classrooms, the Academy Building was larger than its predecessor. It also had the newest technology available at the time—electric lights—and by 1915 was home to the Town Library (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Newark, 1915).

The daily routine at the Newark Public High School, while at the Academy Building, started at 8:00 a.m. That start time was intended to allow for students from outlying areas of the town to walk or ride by horse and buggy to school, since there were no school buses and the area was still largely agrarian. According to Samuel Buckingham, a graduate of Newark in 1923, many students used the Sherwood Stables on Main Street to “park” their buggies (or sleighs during the winter months) during school hours (Buglass, 51). The instructional day ended at 4:00 p.m., but students involved in athletics would then report to the fields behind the University of Delaware’s Wolf Hall for practice since they had the only available sports fields in the area at the time. All sports games, most notably football (which won five straight county championships from 1920-1925), were also held



BEGINNINGS, 1893-1898

Originally called the Newark Public School, the institution that would become Newark High School has existed in four different incarnations at four different sites since 1893. This makes Newark one of the oldest continuously running public high schools in the state of Delaware. The first incarnation of what later became Newark High School was located on 83 East Main Street in downtown Newark. The building itself belonged to the Unified School District and was erected by the town in 1884 at the cost of \$10,000. With no lights and heated by a steam boiler, the two-story, four-room school house was intended to provide the existing primary school with more “modern” facilities (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Newark, 1891). When the structure was built in the late nineteenth-century, a student who wished to pursue an education past the eighth grade would have had to move to nearby Wilmington or attend a private school, like the nearby Newark Academy, in order to accomplish that.

That quickly changed, however, when the district decided to begin “college preparation” courses on the second floor of the structure in the early 1890s. The first graduating class consisted of just nine students in 1893, nearly matching the amount of faculty members who taught there at the time—five (Newark Post, 3). Foreshadowing the continuous growth that would take place in the city during the twentieth century, the conditions began to get cramped at 83 East Main Street with nearly 185 students from first through twelfth grade crammed into such a limited amount of space. It was then decided in 1898 that the older, high school-aged students would move to



behind Wolf Hall and were generally well attended by the local community. In fact, when Newark played big games that were sold out, students and community members would find ladders and climb over the brick walls at Wolf Hall in order to watch the contests (Buglass, 52).

While academic pursuits and athletics have always been important, the school also created a community with social events as well. One lasting tradition that started at the Academy Building was the Junior-Senior Prom. The first documented prom was held at Wolf Hall in 1923. According to alumni from that year, the prom was (and still is) one of the “biggest events for the season” for not only the students and faculty, but also the community as a whole. In fact, the 1923 prom was attended not only by students but also many townsfolk who turned out to watch the students dance the night away to the tunes of the big band era (Buglass, 52).

One other major event in Newark High School’s history occurred at the Academy Building. While the school was located there, the only prolonged educational interruption in Newark High School’s history occurred. In October 1918, classes were suspended for three weeks due to the Spanish Flu (known today as the Influenza Pandemic of 1918). Due to the highly contagious manner of the virus combined with the grave situation occurring just to the north in Philadelphia (where the virus hit particularly hard), the district decided to put the safety of the students first. Of the 109 students and seven faculty members attending the school during the 1918-1919 school year, none are believed to have died—largely due to that decision (Newark Post, 4). By eliminating contact between students at school, the district essentially created a *de facto* quarantine that may have also saved



Newark High School on Academy Street, now part of the University of Delaware campus and called Pearson Hall. Courtesy University of Delaware Library.

the city from heavy losses by eliminating one of the only daily meeting areas, which prevented possible carriers of the virus from spreading it.

TIME TO GROW AGAIN, 1920

As the school (and city) continued to grow, a report on Delaware schools conducted by Columbia University in 1919 ended up spurring the local community to build a more modern facility. The report listed various problems, calling the building an “inadequate fire trap” with “narrow halls,” with “inaccessible” outhouses and a basement “deep in mud and water” (*Newark Post*, 5). The city in 1920 passed a bond issue to begin construction of a new facility at the corner of High Street (now known as Academy Street) and Lovett Avenue. The financial cost of the building, which at the end of construction was \$417,225, was helped with a \$125,000 donation by local philanthropist Pierce S. du Pont. Once classes were moved to the new address in 1925, the Academy Building continued to serve the Newark community as an expanded town library. When the collection grew too large, it too left the Academy Building and the building was eventually sold to the University of Delaware. Today the Academy Building is home to the University’s Public Relations Office and has been on the National Register of Historical Places since 1976.

Du Pont also was a major benefactor in building a second school for high school level students in Newark—the Newark Colored School. That school was located a few blocks away on New London Road and was built for the growing African-American population of Newark for a cost of \$36,250. Du Pont paid over 50% of the cost, about \$19,000, making the Newark Colored School one of the most expensive one room school houses in the country, although it still paled in comparison to the facilities and faculty of the new “white” school (Public School Insurance Evaluation Records, 1941). The two populations would continue to be taught in separate facilities until the 1954 *Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education* ruling, which stated that “separate facilities are not equal



John A. Munroe (seated), the preeminent Delaware historian, began his teaching career in the late 1930s at Newark High School while completing his masters degree at the University of Delaware. Courtesy University of Delaware.

Eventually those classes returned to the high school site with another expansion in 1952, adding a large cafeteria to the facility as well as additional classrooms and a greenhouse. After the 1952 additions, 83 Main Street became the district office for the Newark Public School District and its later incarnation, the Christina School District, until 2004. Like the Academy Building, it has also been placed on the National Registry of Historical Places (since 1982).

Two notable additions to the school took place at the High Street address, one of which was the

CITIZEN PROFILE ETTA JAMES WILSON

by Marie Godfrey

Native Delawarean Etta J. Wilson was educated in the Newark schools. She began her teaching career at Welsh Tract School in the early 1900s. Soon after WWI she became very active in upgrading education in Delaware schools and encouraging the growth of the Parent Teacher Associations. She even wrote for the *Newark Post* for about five years. Her memoirs are told in her autobiography, *Dreams and Realities (The Story of Delaware’s Efforts to Awaken All of Her People)*, which was completed by

Professor George H. Henry for the University Press 1968.

In 1970, the Etta J. Wilson Elementary School in Drummond Hill was named for her and a portrait of her was presented to the school by Dr. George V. Kirk, who presided at the dedication ceremonies as superintendent of the Newark School District. Etta was too ill to attend the ceremonies and she died at 88 years of age. She died on November 20, 1971 and was buried in the cemetery at the Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church.

Etta and her sister Nellie (who was a music teacher) lived at 313 Main Street in Newark. Their home was torn down and the Newark Housing Authority is now in its place. Their home was also a home to their nephews John Wilson “Iron Mike” O’Daniel and James Allison O’Daniel while they attended Delaware College.



in Delaware. Other firsts that started at High Street include the first (documented) senior class trip in 1938 (to Washington, D.C., via train), split lunches in 1939 and the creation of a marching band in 1941.

One of the biggest events of the year for the school and local community started while the school was located at High Street. That event surrounded a football game on Thanksgiving. Originally the D.I.A.A. championship game took place on Thanksgiving, and, given Newark’s football prowess during the 1920s, it became a Thanksgiving tradition for a



game to take place. It appears that by the 1930s, an annual game was scheduled and played against whoever was Newark’s traditional rival at that particular time. Conrad, Elkton and Christiana high schools all fulfilled that role against Newark at various points during a thirty-three-year span from 1936 to 1969. During that period,



facilities.” The Newark Colored School building is still used by the Newark Parks and Recreation Department today and is now called the George Wilson Center.

THIRTY YEARS ON HIGH STREET, 1925-1955

At the High Street address, the Newark Public High School simply became Newark High School. With plenty of land around the site, the school saw several expansions after its opening in 1925. An auditorium (with the stage doubling as the gym), as well as additional labs and classrooms were added to the facility in 1931 for an additional \$221,316 (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Newark, 1931). That addition essentially doubled the size of the school which was not yet a decade old at that point. Manual Training classes were taught for the first

The Newark High School Yellowjacket mascot has had many artistic style changes over the years. Courtesy Newark High School.



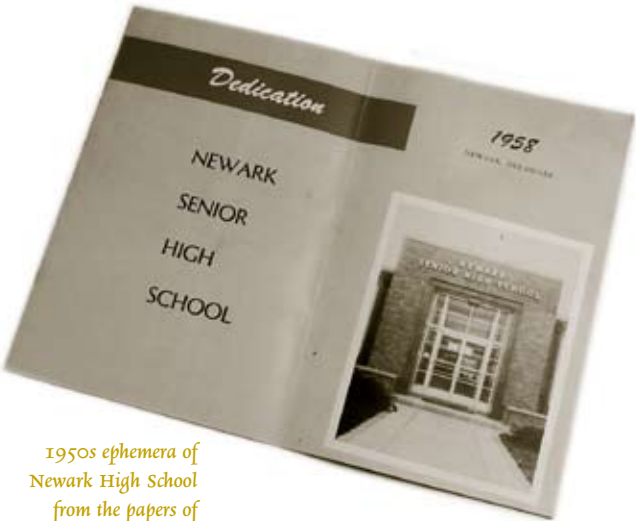
time, although students in those classes would have to walk a block and a half to 83 Main Street (the Primary School had also moved to a new address at the corner of High Street and Delaware Avenue in the late 1920s).

Newark tallied an impressive 29-4 record against those schools. Yearbooks from that era generally devoted an entire page to the game often using a victory in that game to at least legitimize a losing season. The tradition ended with the creation of the Blue Hen Conference in 1970, which mandated the end of the regular season in early November.

WORLD WAR II ERA

As with the influenza scare in 1918, Newark High School while at High Street saw another major change based on events occurring outside the city. When World War II arrived, many faculty members were either drafted or enlisted to fight in the military against the Axis Powers (Germany, Japan and Italy). In fact, several members of the Class of 1944 were called upon to actually teach

underclassmen classes due to a shortage of available teachers that year (Newark Post, 5). Several Newark students also joined their teachers in enlisting prior to their graduations in 1944 and 1945. They included Arthur Gribble, William Lehman, Anthony Gaskiewicz, Ollie Salminen, Oliver Suddard, Eugene Campbell, Frank Sanborn, Walter “Cueball” Martin, Howard Dean, “Ebbie” Lewis, “Alex” Zabenko, Robert Davis, Gerald Gilston, Lewis McCormick, Henry Hammond, Hugh McKinney, Herbert Murphy, Oscar Pickett and Thomas Runk (Buglass, 100 and 103). Interestingly enough, for those not leaving for the front, the war effort did leave another longterm impact on student life at Newark—it led to Drivers Education becoming a class in 1944.



1950s ephemera of Newark High School from the papers of E. William Martin, the Newark architect who designed this and several other schools for a booming post-war population. Courtesy University of Delaware Library.



Following the war, an influx of families to the city of Newark combined with a high birth rate (the “baby boom”) caused the student population to swell at a rate of nearly fifteen percent a year between 1945 and 1960—with the high school population (grades 10-12) climbing from 478 in 1956 to 1,096 in 1960 (These Are Our Schools, 18). Despite additions being made at the High Street address as late as 1952, this spike in enrollment led to calls for a newer facility, which was completed in 1955. The High Street building was transformed into a middle school (called Central Middle School) following the move and continued to serve the Newark community until 1981. In 1983, it was sold to the University of Delaware, which rededicated the building in 1994 as Pearson Hall. Today, the original high school campus currently houses the Geography Department, the Communications

Department and SLTV (UD’s student-run television network). The athletics fields were also paved over to form a large parking lot and the Manual Training building now serves as the University Registrar’s office.

With an increasing population, construction began in 1954 on the current incarnation of Newark High School. The designated site for the new building was to be along the newly extended portion of Delaware Avenue between South Chapel Street and Library Avenue. At a cost of \$3,532,312 the facility at 750 East Delaware Avenue held

Bragging rights are held by the Yellowjackets sports teams, which lead all other public schools in Delaware in the number of state titles held. Courtesy Newark Black Family Reunion



its first session in 1955 and was fully completed in 1958. When construction was completed, it was to be an integrated school able to serve an ethnically mixed student population of around 1,000 students. Newark was one of the first schools in the state to accept integration without resistance when it arrived, avoiding the court orders other schools were forced to obey (Buglass, 130). Integration went into effect prior to the move during the 1954-1955 school year, as twenty-two African-American students enrolled for the first time. Of the 126 members of the Class on 1955, there were three African-Americans who shared the honor of being the first non-whites to graduate from Newark High School—Kenneth Hall, Ronald Hayman and Arthur Money (Krawen, 1955).

NEWARK HIGH SCHOOL, 1955

The opening of the school in September 1955 was to be a civic event. When the day arrived, however, the school only had one wing open and was deemed not quite ready for students. The official first day of classes at the new building took place in October 17, 1955, as the tenth through twelfth graders arrived at the High Street address for the final time, collected their books, and walked a half mile to the new school. While conditions were cramped as construction continued on the B and C wings of the building, students settled into a routine of split sessions (Dedication of Newark High School program, 6). It was not until September of 1958 that the entire facility, including sports fields (until then practices and games were held at the old building on High Street), were completed.



Students marched from the old high school on High Street to the new building on East Delaware Avenue on opening day, October 17, 1955. Courtesy Newark High School.

CITIZEN PROFILE

JOHN R. DOWNES

by Theresa Hessey

John Downes was a prominent Newark physician. A native of Denton, Maryland, he was born in 1879. After graduating from the University of Maryland’s medical school, Downes arrived in Newark and took over the practice of Dr. Blake. During his career, Downes served as the doctor of various sports teams at Newark High School and was active in the American Legion Junior Baseball League. Downes also served as the chairman of the local police committee. To recognize his many contributions to the Newark community, particularly his commitment to children, the Christina School District named the John R. Downes Elementary School in his honor.



The growth of the City of Newark during the late 1950s and early 1960s quickly outpaced even the most radical projections. With the completion of I-95 to the south and east of town, Newark quickly became a suburban area bringing more students into its feeder pattern. In order to meet the demands of a growing community and to end overcrowding at Newark, the Newark Special School District began construction of a second high school (Christiana High School), which was completed in 1963. Even with the new high school though the surging population forced a massive expansion to take place at Newark High. The school itself was expanded in 1970, adding what are referred to as the D and E wings (both three stories tall), a second cafeteria located in the



Newark High School basketball team, then and now.

basement, a newly expanded school library, an auditorium and a second gym (which was among the largest in the area at the time). The original school library was located in the current Main Office of the building, while the original gym is now referred to as the East Gym. This expansion also eliminated some overcrowding concerns at the middle school, as both Newark and Christiana added ninth grade to their buildings, which now had a capacity (combined) to serve nearly 4,000 students.

STUDENT TRADITIONS



The Krawen, 1949 yearbook for Newark High School. Courtesy Newark High School.

the introduction of class floats 1969. Since the float competition between the classes began, the Senior class has won fifteen times—compared to the Junior class’s twelve wins, Sophomore class’s seven, and the Freshman class’s three (as of 2006). This competition has also transformed the school itself by igniting school spirit with spirited Pep Fests, the weeklong Spirit Week, Homecoming court elections (Class Princesses were added in 1984; King and Class Princes in 1988), a bonfire before the game (1989-1995), a Homecoming Dance (since 1988), and a Junior-Senior Girls Football Game, called the Powderpuff Game (since 1998). These traditions at Newark High

With these massive surges of population and changes to the school, many traditions evolved and changed. With the end of Thanksgiving Day football games in 1970, Homecoming became the premier sports game of the season. Homecoming had been an important tradition prior to 1970, largely surrounding the crowning of the Football Queen (later Homecoming Queen) and her attendants during halftime of the game. The earliest documented Football Queen was Peggy Borchardt in 1955 (Krawen, 1956). As it became the game of the season, additional traditions were added to the festivities, such as



School have only served to make this game the highlight of the fall season in the community.

Many other, non-athletic activities have also held sway in recent school history. An annual Shakespeare Festival, known as the Elizabethan Rout, ran from 1970 to 1988. Started by teacher Donald Rittenhouse, the Rout was a “feast featuring music and entertainment in fifteenth-century period costumes” that occurred over several days in the month of December and was extremely well attended by faculty, students and alumni (Krawen, 1988). School musicals and plays have also provided students with a place to express their talents over the past fifty years with the first play, *Pride and Prejudice*, being performed in 1945. Students who want to perform but not in a structured format have had the Talent Show to showcase their abilities since 1982. Similarly, the staff has held a Faculty Dodgeball Tournament since 2004 as a way of giving



Phyllis Tucker-Saunders (standing second from left) is noted for becoming the school’s first black cheerleader. The marching band and flag corps, along with the cheerleaders, are always popular components of Main Street parades. Courtesy Newark Black Family Reunion.

students a release from the constant grind of school life. Newark’s biggest fall dance for most of its recent history was the Sadie Hawkins Dance, which was held each November starting in 1969 thru 1981. It was from this dance that the Pep Fest adapted the tradition of holding a “Homeliest Gal” competition (between male seniors dressed as women). That odd tradition started in 1973 and continues today.

YELLOWJACKET SPORTS AND SPIRIT

One of the reasons for the high levels of school spirit was the plethora of athletic successes Newark has experienced since the creation of the Blue Hen Conference in 1970. As of the writing of this book, Newark has won a total of thirty-seven state titles—an average of one per year—which is the most of any public school in the state. The football team has won nine state titles, followed by the Girls Swim team with seven, the Boys Baseball team with six and the Girls Volleyball team with five. Several coaches are already in or destined for the Delaware Sports Museum and Hall of Fame, including Roman Ciesinski, Bob Hoffman (for whom the football stadium is named) and Butch Simpson (who holds the state record for most victories by a football coach).



The Ms-Match of the Century. Thus was billed the tennis match between Newark High math teacher Dorothy Munroe and associate principal Dr. John McIntosh, who foolishly claimed that “any man can beat any woman” not long after the famous 1973 Bobby Riggs/Billie Jean King contest. Munroe countered “your \$25 to my year’s salary.” The Buzz reported on May 29, 1974, that McIntosh offered \$25 to call it off, but the entire school turned out at 3:00 p.m. on June 6 to see a confident Munroe trounce McIntosh. Courtesy University of Delaware Library.

Today, Newark remains one of the largest schools in the state of Delaware. It currently features four classroom wings on three floors (103 classrooms in all), five administrative centers, two cafeterias, two gyms, a telecommunications studio (which started cable-casting in 1972), a distance learning lab, a Wellness Center (since 1994), nearly 800 computers available for student use, a library (with 20,000 books), and a 700-seat auditorium. In many ways, the school in its various incarnations has represented a guide to the future for the generations of students passing through its halls. As the city has grown, the school has, as well. As the city has changed, so has the high school. Through it all, however, Newark High School has served our community well by representing and advancing the ideals of excellence under changing circumstances—a hallmark of this city during the twentieth century.



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